

NEWSWEEK

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THE ASSASSINATION:

Week in the Sun

She stepped up to the thicket of cameras and microphones, her pouchy eyes darting, her lips pursed in a self-assured smile, her black shoulder bag bulging with the letters, the photos, and the mother's memorabilia she has taken to calling "documents." It was as if she had been waiting all her 56 shadowed years for this one floodlit moment of celebrity. A cruel aberration of history at last had thrust it upon her—the death

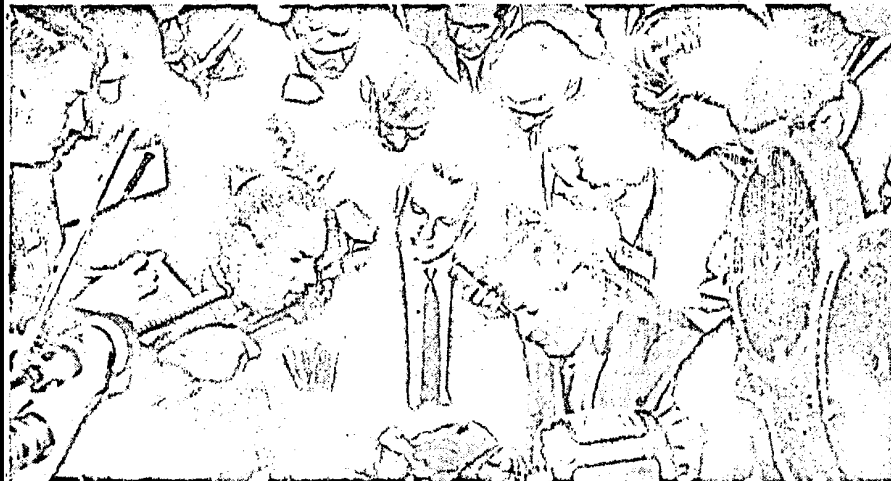
finish." But this was her moment to be, before the world, the mother of a friendless son, protective even if he hadn't bothered writing or visiting in the last year of his life. "I still believe my son is innocent," she said. "I believe the assassin is still abroad..."

She had said that all along, but now she uncorked a surprise she had promised the commission and the press. Her

son was simply a "scrapgoat [sic] ... to take the blame for the killing." One of her "documents" had set her thinking—a letter Lee wrote before defecting in 1959: "Mother, I must go to Russia and I must do it now ... try to understand." Her Delphic reading: "I believe Lee ... [was a U.S.] intelligence agent." Her evidence? She smiled her knowing smile and asked: "Who can prove he's a CIA agent?" (Next day CIA Director

lishers for a memoir she hopes will be worth a \$25,000-to-\$50,000 guarantee. She plans more "investigation," more speeches, more writing; she is neither unaware of nor averse to the opportunities history has offered her in her lonely autumn years. Yet she considers herself, so she says, no more than a "self-efficient" woman with an affronted sense of justice and a mother's mission: "I will employ every means possible to right the injustice done my son."

►The man who finally deprived Lee Harvey Oswald of justice, Jack Ruby, was due to go on trial this week for killing the accused assassin. The charge was murder, the defense temporary insanity. But the central question was laid aside last week while Ruby's defense, headed by stagecrafty Melvin Belli, put Dallas itself on trial. With a long suc-



While Ruby and his lawyers put Dallas on trial, Marguerite Oswald spoke up for her 'scrapgoat' son

of John F. Kennedy at the hands, so they said, of her troubled son Lee. Now people listened and took notes and snapped cameras when Marguerite Oswald talked. All last week, she talked. And talked. And talked.

For three days, she talked to Chief Justice Earl Warren's commission investigating the assassination, about herself and her family and the son whose guilt she refuses, most of the time, to concede. Her testimony was not so much an examination as a monologue, high, singsong, and by her own account, "very fast." The first day, Warren reported, the commission wedged in only an "occasional question." After a second day, he grinned and corrected himself—"semi-occasional"—and a less gallant member stalked out muttering: "It looks as though we may be here for the rest of the winter." After a third, however, she was finished with the commission—and ready to meet the press.

Before then, her appointed lawyer, John F. Doyle, had been tugging her gently away.

John McCone said Oswald had never been employed by the agency.)

The fact was, Warren said, that she had no evidence beyond her own "speculation—I use the word speculation as she used it—that he was an agent." Indeed, if some of her testimony was relevant, "much of it ... [was] hearsay, conjecture, her own opinions ... She has not given us any facts that could change the picture as we knew it up to the time she testified."

'Helpful': Still Warren called her "helpful"; if his choice of words was merely politic, it was plain that Mrs. Oswald had, at least, acquainted the commission with the first authority figure in Lee's life—a life that could be read as a running rebellion against authority.

After her week in the sun, Mrs. Oswald was not yet ready to retire again to the shadows. Departing her commission-paid suite at the Willard Hotel, she moved into a single and continued holding court for reporters. Then, she planned to go on to New York



cession of witnesses—among them a former mayor, the criminal bar association president, and merchant prince Stanley Marcus of Neiman-Marcus—the defense tried to show that the city was too image-conscious to give Ruby a fair trial. After four days of snappish hearings, Judge Joe E. Brown decided against ruling immediately and ordered the lawyers to start picking a jury—in Dallas.

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